

Change in Practice for Counting Non-Filing Characters in MARC 21

With the advent of MARC 21, the method of counting non-filing characters was clarified. On February 20, 2003 the Library of Congress implemented a change in practice for counting non-filing characters to reflect the MARC 21 clarification. This change applies when definite or indefinite articles are present and the first filing word following the article begins with a character modified by a diacritic. When an initial article is present (see MARC 21 Appendix F), the rule for counting non-filing characters is as follows:

Count the article, diacritics associated with the article, any blank space, an alif, an ayn, or any mark of punctuation preceding the first filing character. Do **not** count a diacritic associated with the first filing character (the alif and ayn are not diacritics, they are special spacing characters not considered for filing). See Note 1 below regarding candidates for "the first filing character."

This practice is best illustrated by examples. The documentation convention of using a space on either side of a subfield code is not used to insure that there is no confusion about what is being counted:

Old practice:

245 13 \$aL'été ...
245 15 \$aLos últimos ...
245 05 \$aDer öffentliche Dienst ...
440 #5 \$aLos últimos alazapas ; \$v2
245 15 \$aal-'Ālam ...

New Practice:

245 12 \$aL'été ...
245 14 \$aLos últimos ...
245 04 \$aDer öffentliche Dienst ...
440 #4 \$aLos últimos alazapas ; \$v2
245 14 \$aal-'Ālam ...

Other Helpful Examples With Initial Articles (these **do not** reflect a change in practice):

245 04 \$aal-'Arabīyah ...
245 14 \$aHē Monē ...
245 12 \$aL'enfant criminal.
245 05 \$a[The Part of Pennsylvania that ... townships].
245 15 \$aThe "other" person ... [See Note 2 below]

The LC database is currently being analyzed to identify existing records that need to be changed programmatically as a result of the new practice. LC staff creating or updating bibliographic records in Voyager, RLIN, or OCLC are asked to begin following the new practice immediately.

Note 1: The following characters can be considered candidates as "the first filing character": Latin letters, Arabic numbers, super or subscript numbers, AE digraph, OE digraph, crossed d, eth, Turkish i, Polish l, script l, hooked o, hooked u, slashed o, Icelandic thorn, hatch mark (#), ampersand, plus sign.

Note 2: One example in MARC 21 (Field 245, p. 2, Second indicator, October 2002) does not reflect the rule stated above and will be adjusted in a subsequent update:

245 14\$aThe "winter mind" ...

will be revised to:

245 15\$aThe "winter mind" ...

Cataloging Policy and Support Office
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